

THE DECEPTIONS

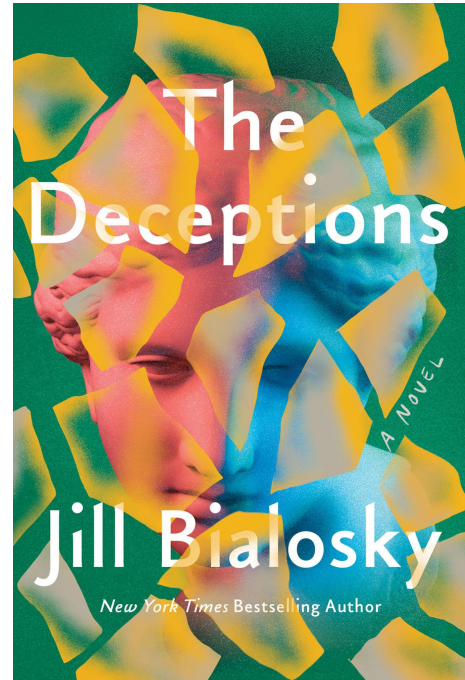
READING GROUP GUIDE

by Jill Bialosky

About the Book

An explosive tale of art and myth, desire and betrayal, from New York Times bestselling author Jill Bialosky

Something terrible has happened and I don't know what to do. An unnamed narrator's life is unraveling. Her only child has left home, and her twenty-year marriage is strained. Anticipation about her soon-to-be-released book of poetry looms. She seeks answers to the paradoxes of love, desire, and parenthood among the Greek and Roman gods at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. As she passes her days teaching at a boys' prep school, spending her off-hours sequestered in the museum's austere galleries, she is haunted by memories of a yearlong friendship with a colleague, a fellow poet struggling with his craft. As secret betrayals and deceptions come to light and rage threatens to overwhelm her, the pantheon of gods assume remarkably vivid lives of their own, forcing her to choose between reality and myth in an effort to free herself from the patriarchal constraints of the past and embrace a new vision for her future.



About the Author

Jill Bialosky is the author of six acclaimed collections of poetry, three critically acclaimed novels, and two memoirs, including *History of a Suicide: My Sister's Unfinished Life*, a *New York Times* bestseller. Her poems and essays have appeared in *The Best American Poetry*, *The New Yorker*, *The Atlantic*, *Harper's Magazine*; *O, The Oprah Magazine*; *The Kenyon Review*, *Harvard Review*, and *The Paris Review*, among other publications. She is executive editor and vice president at W. W. Norton & Company. Her work has been a finalist for the James Laughlin Award, the Paterson Poetry Prize, and the Books for a Better Life Awards. In 2014, she was honored by the Poetry Society of America for her distinguished contribution to poetry. She lives in New York City.

"Jill Bialosky wrote a real page-turner that weaves together love, desire, parenthood, and art. Trust me—*The Deceptions* is a book you won't be able to put down."

—Katie Couric

Discussion Questions

1. What did you think of the narrator's relationship with The Visiting Poet?
2. How do you feel about the narrator? Is she a reliable character?
3. Throughout the novel the narrator expressed her concerns about being reviewed in *The New York Times*. How did the narrator's anxiety change the way you think about book reviews?
4. Images of sculptures and paintings the narrator mentions are included whenever the narrator references one. How did the inclusion of images in the book affect your reading experience?
5. The narrator discusses various pieces of art that have inspired her, including *Leda and the Swan* by Bachiacca. What's a piece of art that moved you and why?
6. What did you think about the narrator's relationship to the chorus and Greek and Roman gods? How do the stories of these deities tie into the narrator's journey?
7. What did you think about the academy and the other teachers the narrator mentions? Did the novel make you reflect upon the effect of the Patriarchy and its effect on the narrator and on your own lives?
8. Whenever the narrator is seeking answers or comfort she returns to the Temple of Dendur and Greek and Roman galleries at The Met. Which galleries at The Met would you like to spend the most time in and why?
9. Were you prepared for the double violation that occurs in the novel?
10. What does the novel have to say about appropriation of ideas and stories?
11. The story ends with a fateful letter and a book review. How did this tie together various themes of the story? Did you find it to be a satisfying ending? What future do you imagine for the narrator?